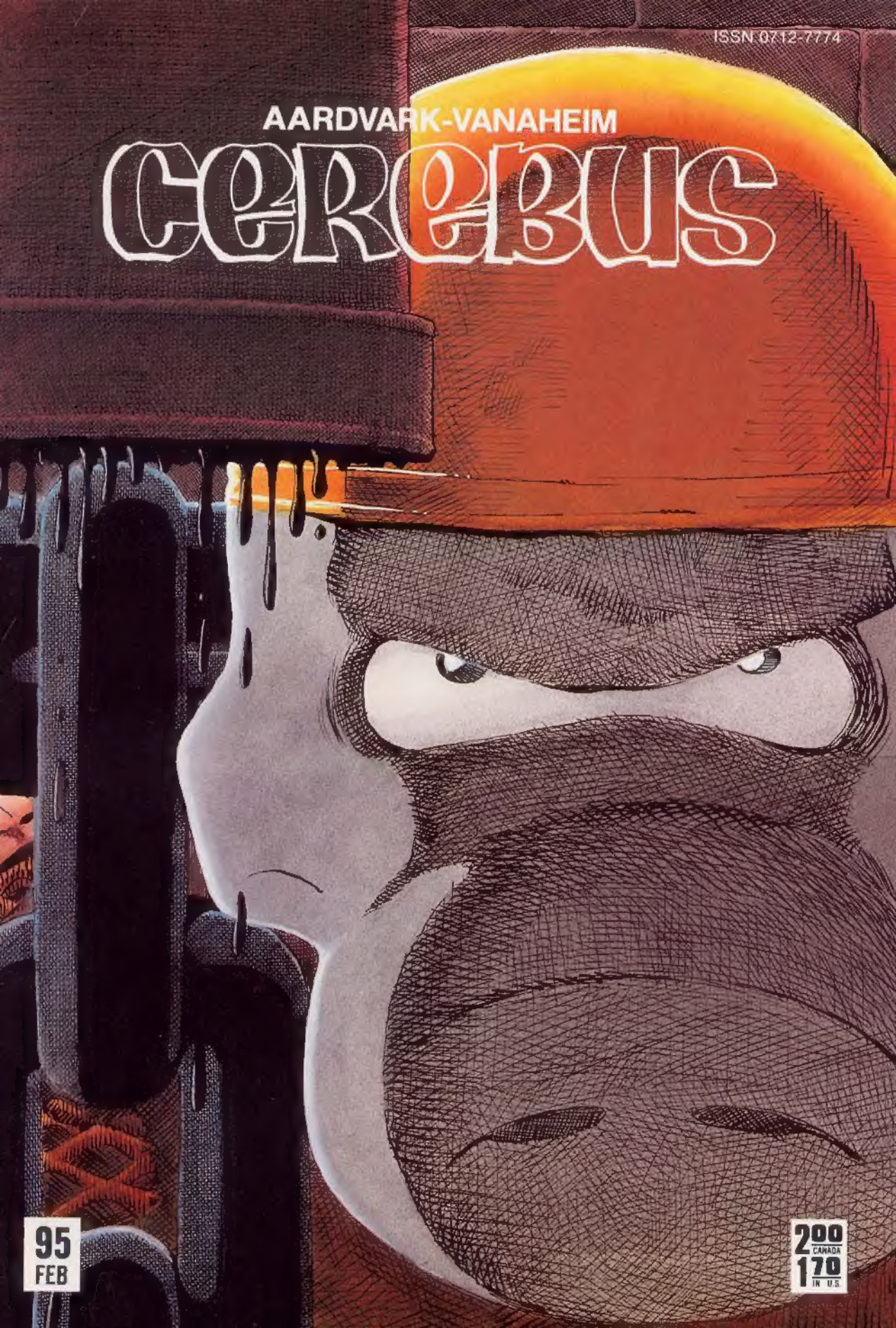
ISSN 0712-7774

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM

CEREBUS



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N O T E • F R O M • T H E P R E S I D E N T

Aloha (again).

The very odd thing about Howard Chaykin, Frank Miller, Marv Wolfman and Alan Moore announcing their intention to create no new work for DC because of the handling of the recent ratings issue is that (I am sure) no one at DC has the slightest idea what they have done wrong; why their post-Crisis golden age is so suddenly and so seriously crippled. It is hard for fans to understand just how inept this company is since the fans have demonstrated such a voracious need for an alternative teat now that they feel can't, in good conscience, rub their cheeks against Marvel's chair leg any more (to mix a metaphor).

I was telling one of the DC execs (you know he's an exec because his name is on everything) at Matt Wagner's End of Mage party that DC was blowing it. (Please bear in mind that the individual in question is a sweet guy and I consider him a friend). I told him that wherever Frank Miller and Alan Moore are at the moment, that is where Comic Books are; as a medium, but, more important to DC, as an industry. At this point, I continued, DC is still treating their creative people as secondary manufacturers. They are not consulted on print runs or anything of importance to the business side. It was Frank Miller and Alan Moore who gave DC their present credibility and they were still considered little better than field hands. Use 'em up and when they lose it throw 'em away. Plenty more where that came from.

By this time I was ranting. But we've got you, I said. By this time next year Frank and Alan will be publishing their own work. I am sure of it. All that is needed is one public fart-at-the-table and the jig is up. DC is going to learn that not everyone in this business can be bought for nickels and dimes and kept out in the fields at back-(and mind-)breaking labour for decade upon decade. DC hasn't changed a bit in fifty years. Everyone there somehow believes that **they** are the ones creating all those comics on the wall. And why not? By law they are. By law the tenth floor of 666 Fifth Avenue created Superman.

At this point my friend's face had become a bit grim to say the least. I reassured him that everyone up at DC is a nice person (which I sincerely think they are) and he brightened visibly. Although I was still ranting this threw me off-balance. I realized I was never going to explain in such a way that he could understand exactly how thoroughly DC misunderstands creative people. They talk about negotiating but what they mean is "This is what we're offering you. You can have a lot of it now and less later or you can have less of it now and more later." That is hardly negotiation. Their way of encouraging good work is to take top-rank talent out for expensive dinners. They really haven't the faintest idea why the best lobster dinner at the best restaurant in the best of cities is not a reward to a creative individual -- that it merely reinforces the Jester in the Court of the Crimson Queen syndrome. You **know** talking to Herself that she considers you countless rungs down the ladder from the rarefied atmosphere in which she functions, socially or otherwise.

What she (and the entire DC hierarchy) has failed to understand is that this is no longer a corporate but a creative world. DC needs Alan Moore and Frank Miller a lot more than either gentlemen needs a dinosaur pimple on Warner Communications' butt.

And so, in the Court of the Crimson Queen comes the rifle crack of the basest kind of flatulence. A ratings system for comics --- a way of forestalling any hypothetical attack by the mindless on the gutless.

Not being courtiers, hangers-on, attendants, underlings, field hands, footmen, servants or slaves Frank, Alan, Marv and Howard exchange glances and hurriedly leave the room.

And none can tell the Crimson Queen (who is now quite crimson indeed) why it is that all those lovely creative fellows have left.

Nor when they might return.

She chews her food carefully and ponders.

To no avail.

CEREBUS

No. 95 FEBRUARY 1987

DAVE SIM
President

KAREN McKIEL
Administrator

GERHARD
Backgrounds, cover-colour, and tones.

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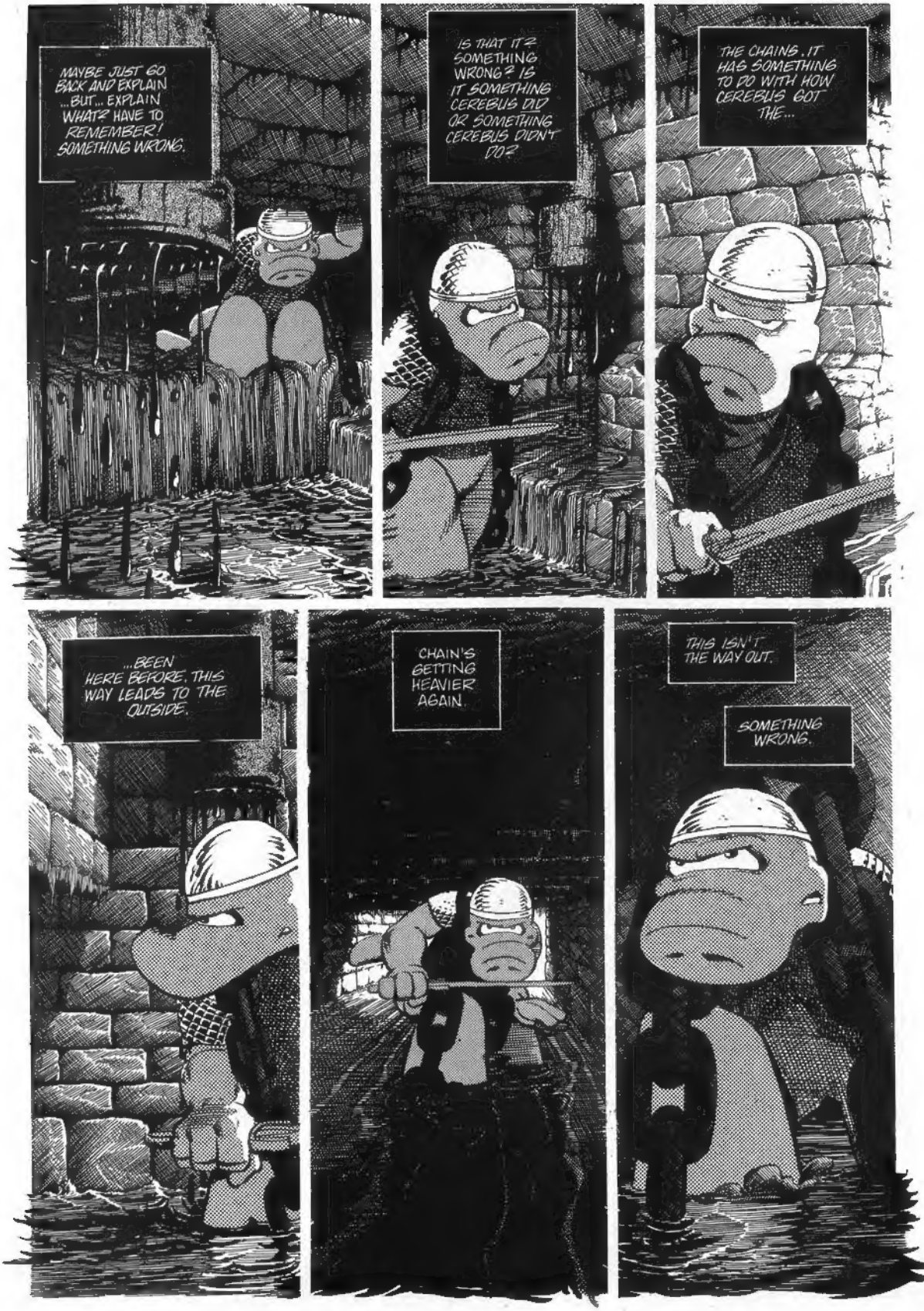
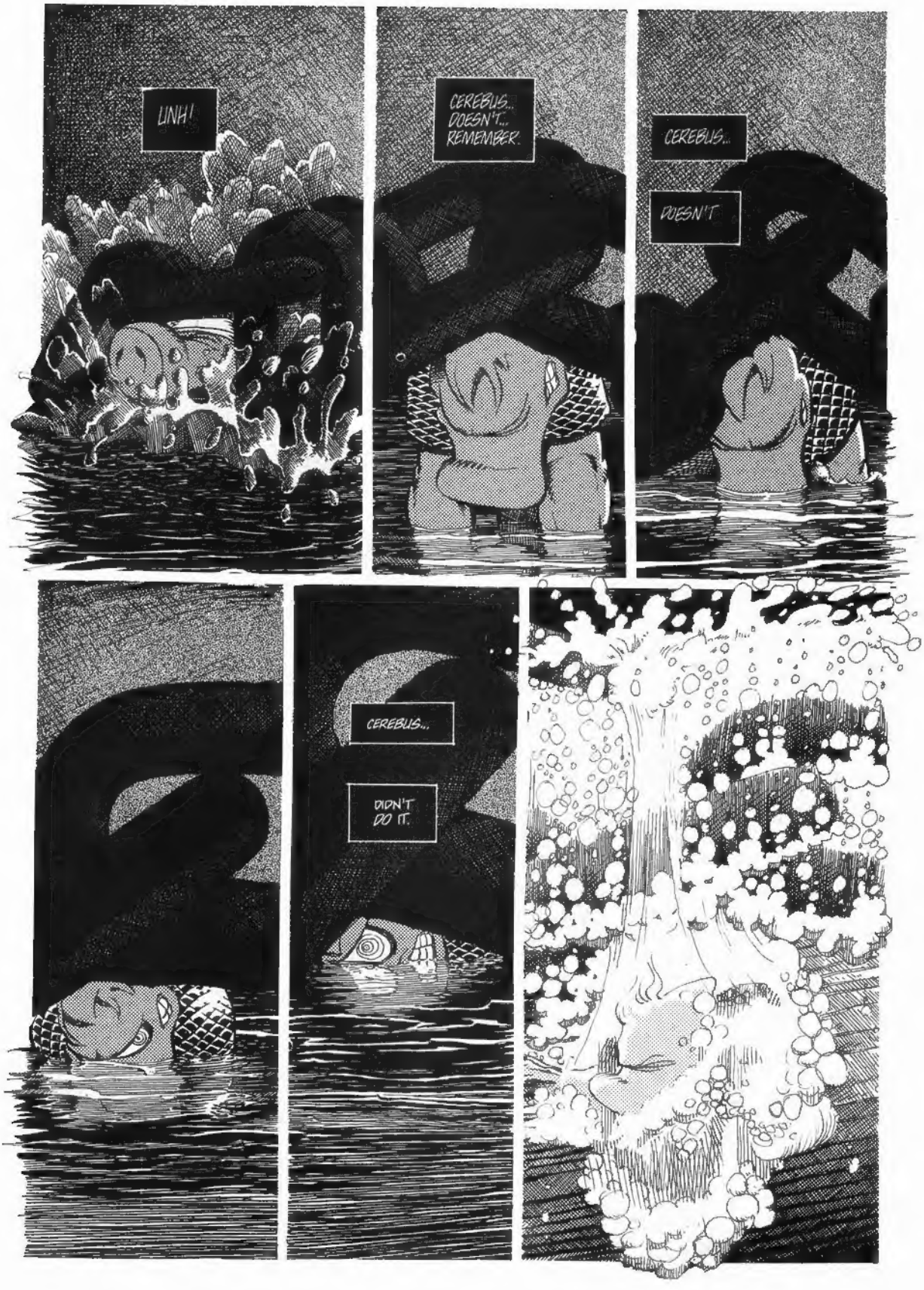
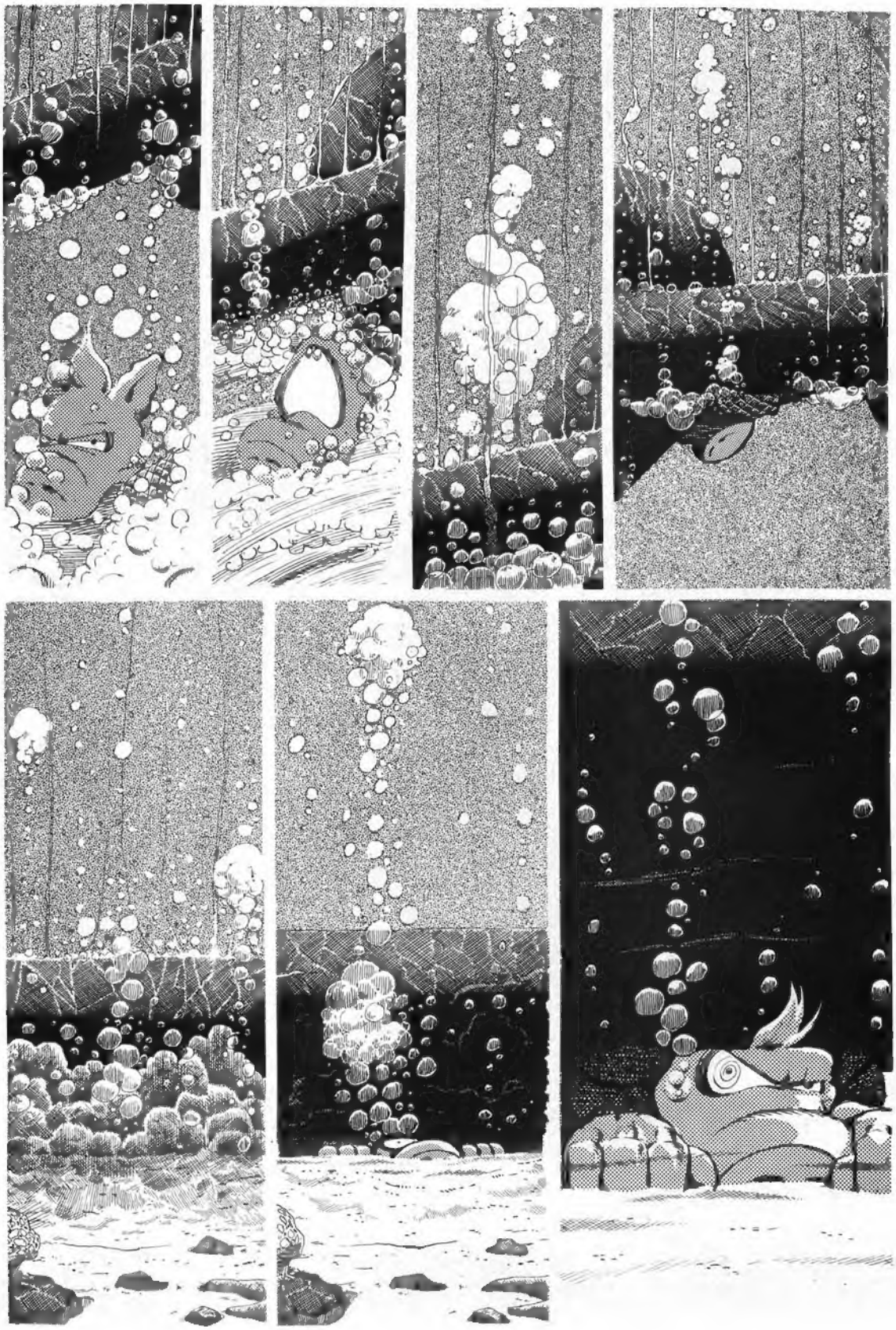
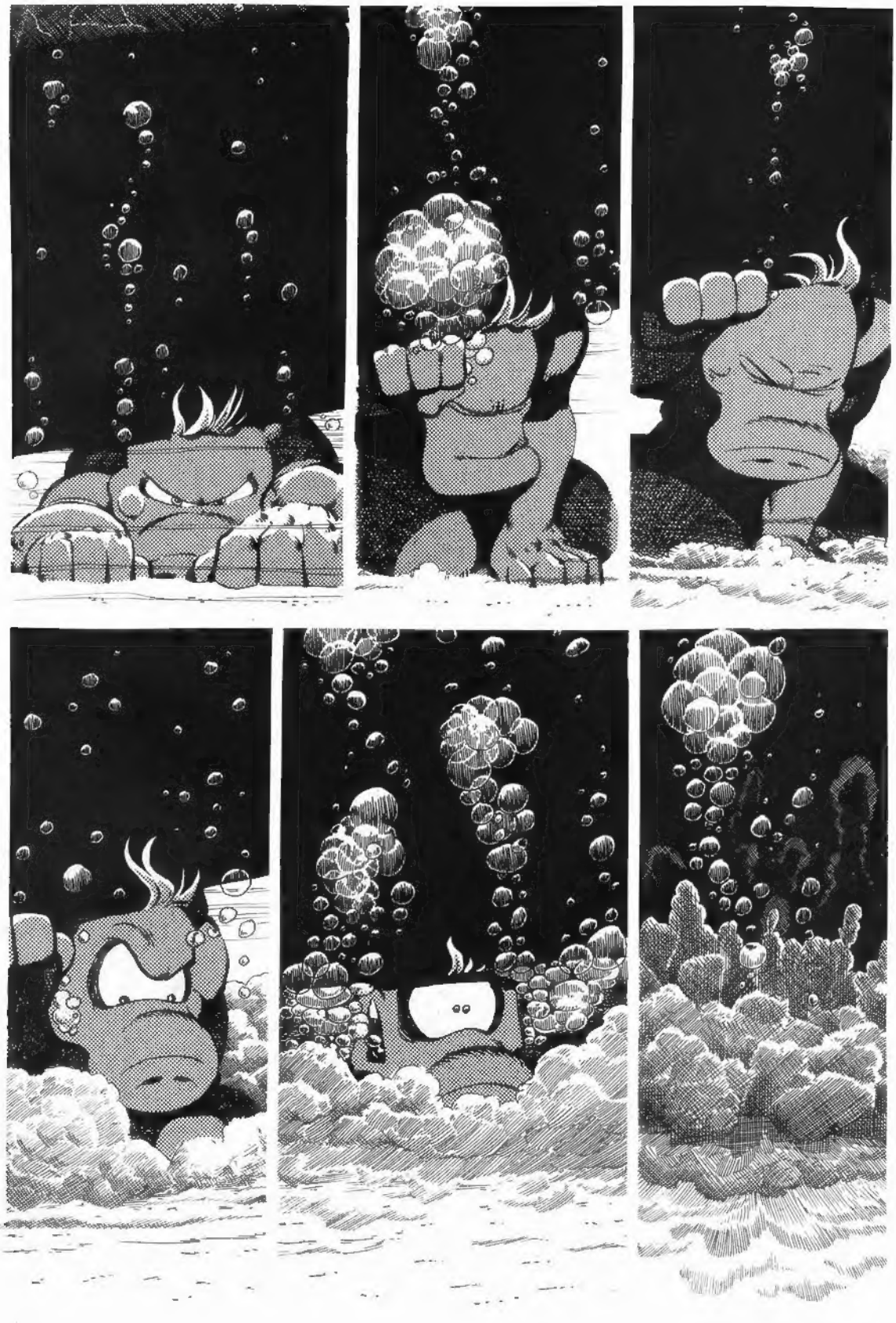
THE CHAINS ARE WHAT MAKE THE DIFFERENCE. SOMETIMES LIGHT, SOMETIMES HEAVY. THEY ARE THERE FOR A REASON THOUGH HE FORGETS...
... EXACTLY...
SO CRAMPED. THE ECHOES OF DROPLETS... OF LIQUID DISPLACED. DEAFENING. NO WAY TO KNOW ...
WHAT HAS CEREBUS DONE? JUST HAVE TO... CONCENTRATE... EVERYTHING IS FAMILIAR.

ODD TRANSFORMATION 4


MAYBE JUST GO BACK AND EXPLAIN ...BUT... EXPLAIN WHAT? HAVE TO REMEMBER! SOMETHING WRONG.
IS THAT IT? SOMETHING WRONG? IS IT SOMETHING CEREBUS DID OR SOMETHING CEREBUS DIDN'T DO?
THE CHAINS. IT HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH HOW CEREBUS GOT THE...
...BEEN HERE BEFORE. THIS WAY LEADS TO THE OUTSIDE.
CHAIN'S GETTING HEAVIER AGAIN.
THIS ISN'T THE WAY OUT.
SOMETHING WRONG.

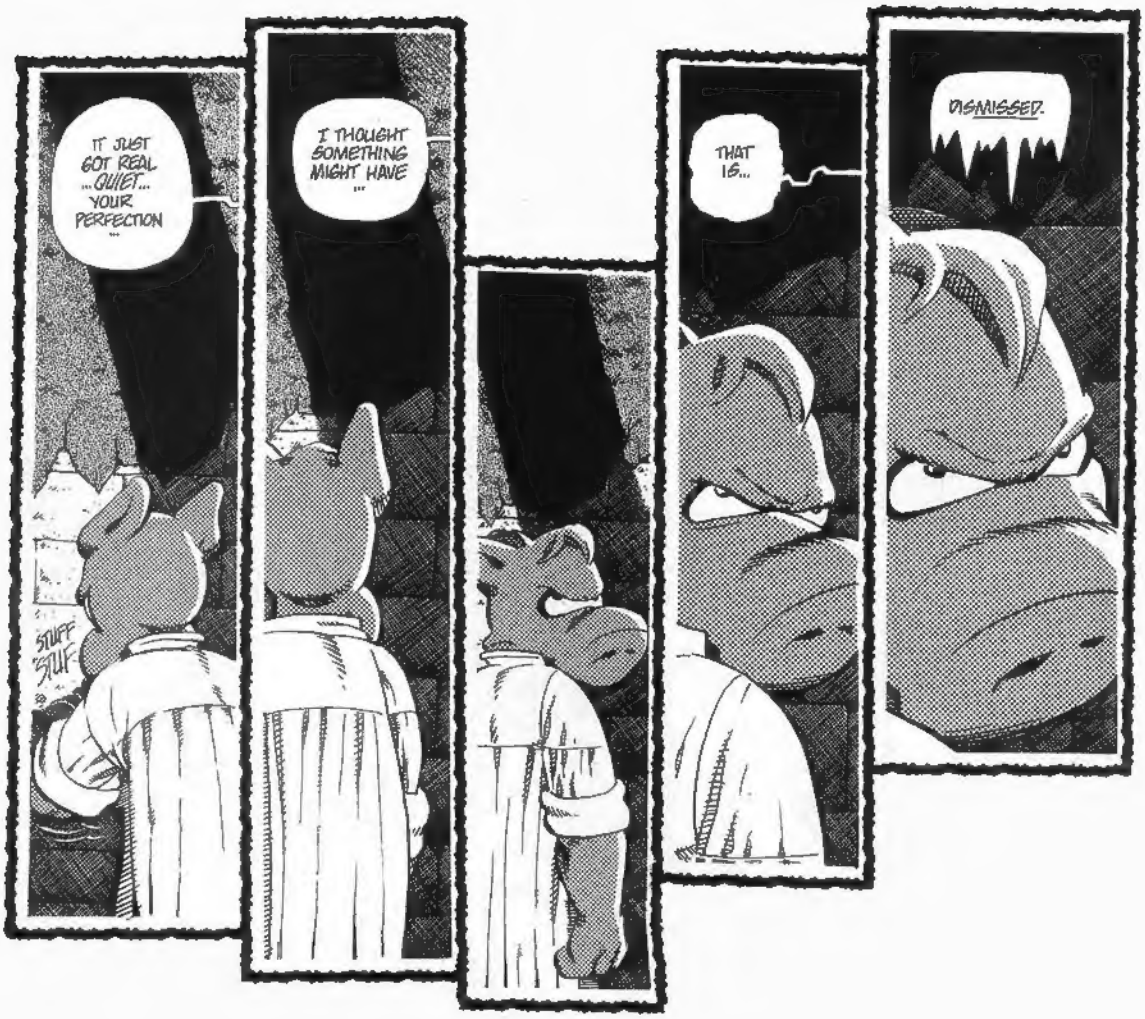

UNH!
CEREBUS... DOESN'T... REMEMBER.
CEREBUS...
DOESN'T
CEREBUS...
DIDN'T DO IT.

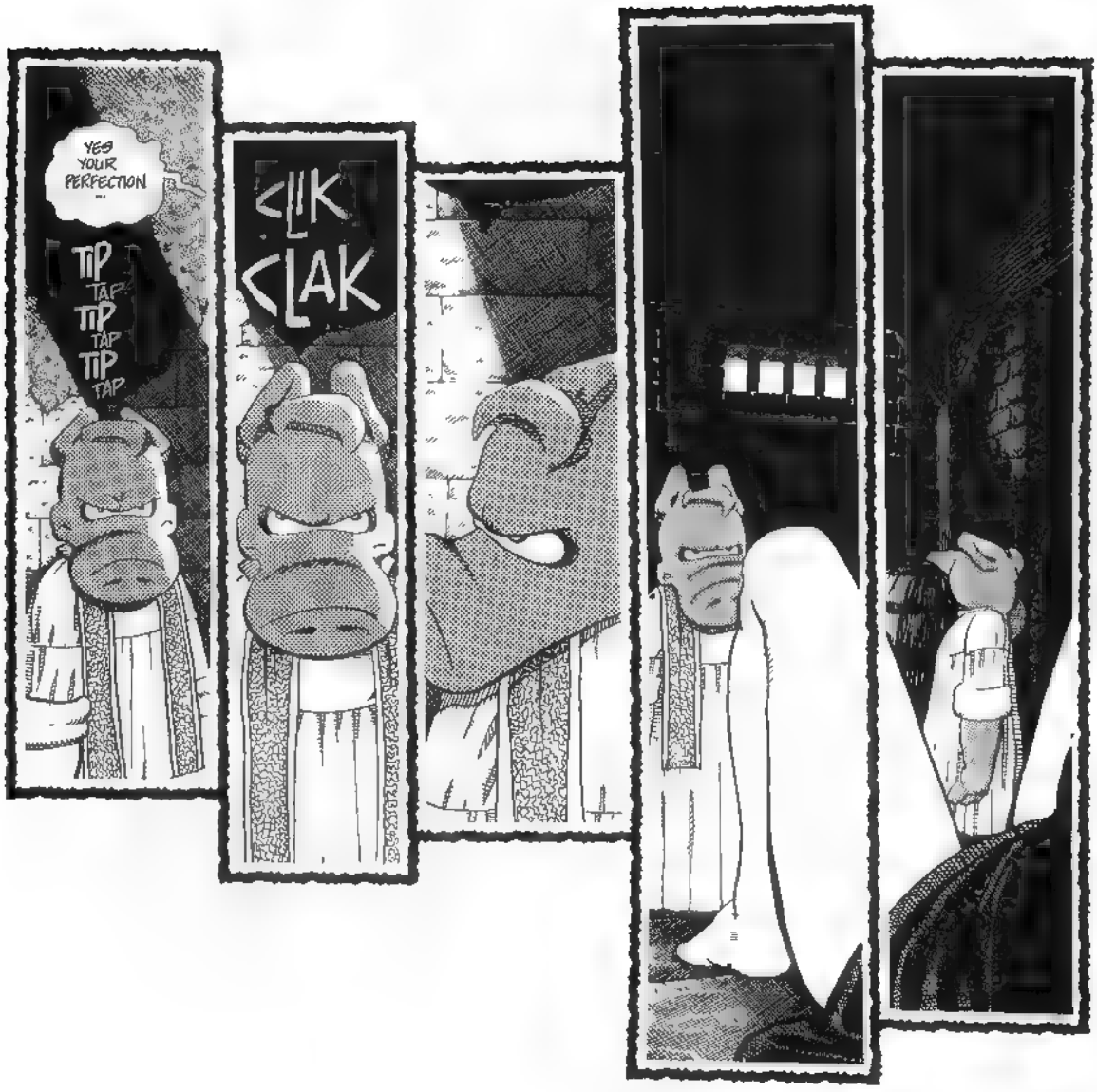


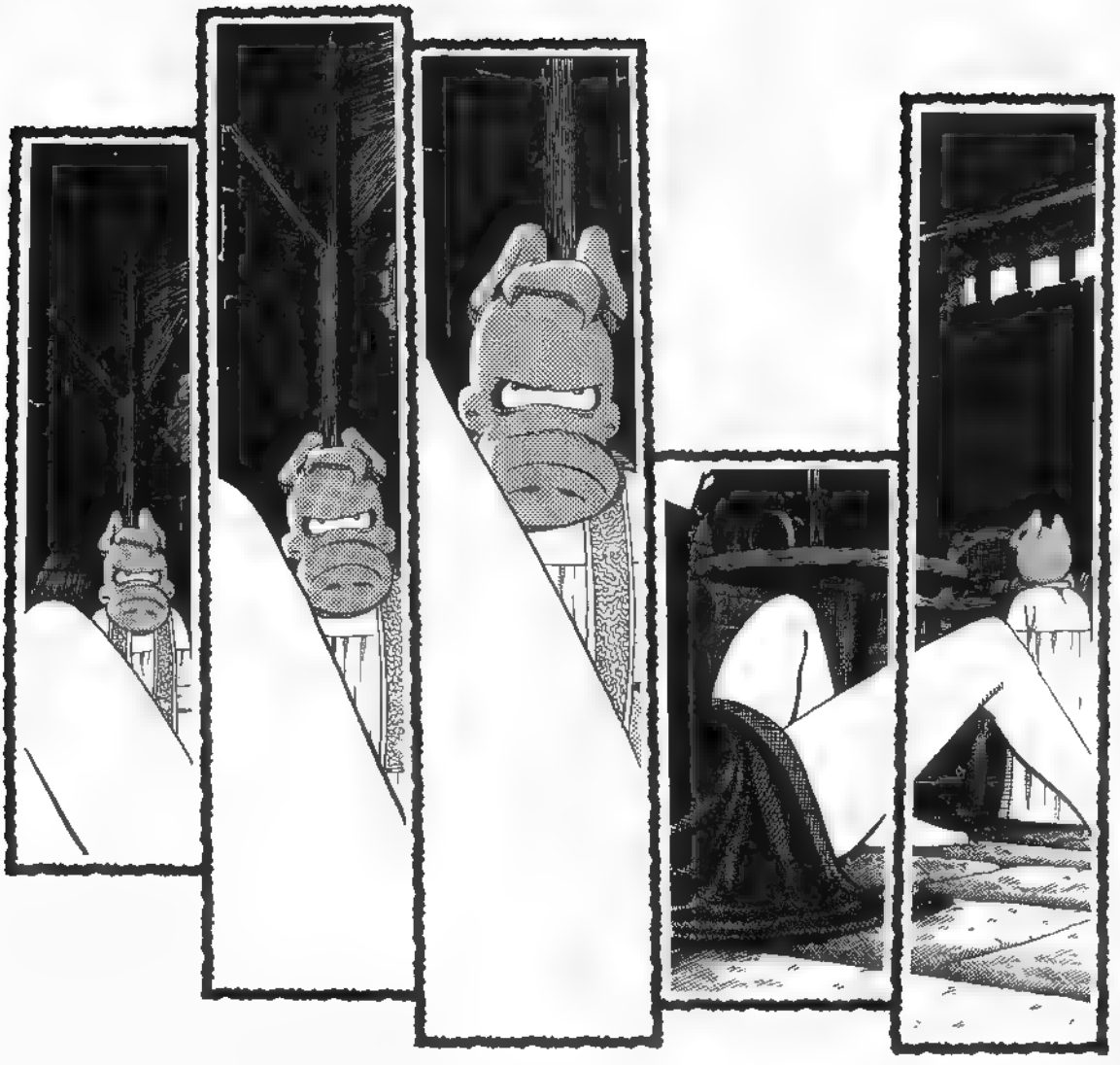


NNNNNNNN
SXG
NNNNN
SNRX

AT EASE!
MOST HOLY .....WAS..... QUESTIONING THE PRISONER
...AND..... MOST HOLY .....FELL..... IN SUCH A WAY THAT
WHAT IS IT YOU WANT?
MOST HOLY IS VERY BUSY.


IT JUST GOT REAL ...QUIET... YOUR PERFECTION ...
I THOUGHT SOMETHING MIGHT HAVE ...
THAT IS...
DISMISSED.
STUFF STUF


YES YOUR PERFECTION ...
TIP TAP TIP TAP TIP TAP
CLIK CLAK



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HIS HOLINESS POPE CEREBUS DECLARES CEREBUS AND ASTORIA TO BE DIVORCED

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AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Dave,

I've spent the day in bed, reading Cerebus from #57-up. All of them, cover to cover. I've been reading the stuff that's over 3 years old at times, old letters, old editorials, old stories. Learning a lot of background I can't help feeling you've heard the about-to-be-following too often-but, on the other hand, it may still have some relevence

June '86 I graduated from college into a state of complacency. Nice corporate job lined up, three months vaction at hand before starting, and a settled relationship to plan around. Right about this time a friend was getting me into comics -- I'd read his set of **Ronin** and picked up **Moonshadow** on his recommendation Then a letter came - "Buy **Cerebus the Aardvark**" Right

It so happened that #85 was on the stands at the time. It had literally been ages since I laughed aloud while reading, but that issue...the rest, as it invariably is with **Cerebus** is history. I'm only missing five issues at this point

Over my three month vacation I read the currents and **Swords**. I decided, I don't even remember why, that you were an asshole. Something to do with your replies in the letter column and all the pictures of you and Gerhard lounging around, drinks in hand. A couple people here and there agree. I didn't question my attitude. The contradiction between it and the book I held in my hands didn't occur to me

Now, I tend to read **Cerebus** in great chunks, with long gaps between. In November, I read my **High Society** reprint. I'd just had a lousy month getting trained for my nice corporate job Two friends, Bill and Greg, saw you in Greenfield, MA while I was away (where you signed **all** their issues --!) and raved about the art for #90 they'd seen

At the beginning of this week I got #90 and read it. The raves were deserved. But what got me was the editorial on the letters page. I realized that it didn't **sound** like an asshole talking. It impelled me to end another long gap and read the real things --not reprints, the real thing, letters, editorials and all.

There's something about imagination and artistic expression that always inspires the urge to hero-worship "Hey, if this person is so much in tune with what turns me on, he she must be a god". The audience goes on to create an image which they then demand of the artist. Humanity gets stripped away. A relationship has been created with no basis in reality It's got to be the worst in comics, where, aside from the monthly deadlines for pouring your guts into print, there are the conventions, the interviews, the barrage of mail...the writer artist gets exposed as a human being to a lot of people who don't believe he is one, and resent it when they're disillusioned.

So...I owe you an apology, Dave. It's exactly what I've been doing for six months -- deriving an ideal from the brilliance of **Cerebus** and resenting you for not living up to it After reading months' worth of editorials and letter columns, and comparing them to some of the diplomatic, eager-to-please pap in other books, I understand a little better. After reading a few descriptions of conventions, looking at the mile-high stack of signatures from Greenfield alone, studying the art that somehow is all created in one month - Christ, How can it be, after months of fielding idiocy in "Aardvark Comment", that you can issue an invitation, "write soon and let me know how you're getting on"? The asshole is the one writing this letter An apology is inadequate, I hope, though, that next time around we'll cross paths, and I can buy you one of those much despised drinks and get a sense of the human being who writes **Cerebus**.

The book itself? It's part of what changed my attitude. I'm really tired of the letters that preach at you "You're getting off-track, Dave...What you **ought** to do, Dave.. Quality is way downhill, Dave..." **I like** tangents. I like dream issues and mind games. I like the extended time frame and slower pacing. I like loose ends that don't get wrapped up for years. I like the effects created by repeated xeroxed panels and solid black backgrounds. Most of all, I like being totally confused, blown away, and all agog for the next issue When I read a stack of Cerebi I sink out of "reality" for hours, long after the last one has been re-bagged. Anything non-chemical that can do this is worthy - not of hero-worship - but of respect, and a certain faith in the artist. I haven't been disappointed yet. With 90 issues under my belt, I doubt I ever will be. I'm willing to bet on **Cerebus** - I hope your sales people will take the odds offered and go for it, too

As it stands now - my mother sighs when she finds out I've spent $20 to get #20. My corporate job is the pits I three months's vacation is something I won't see for awhile The well settled relationship has gone the way of all flesh **Cerebus** isn't the only thing holding me together, but it gets big points for an assist Hopefully, next time you hear from me, a lot of things are going to be different - and I'll be handing you a **big** stack of **Cerebus** to sign

All the best,

Kate DeGroot
P.O. Box 513,
Enfield, CT., 06082

Thanks for the apology, but, really, a lot of times I am an asshole.

****

Howdy, Dave.

I just wanted to write and tell you that I think you're doing a fantastic job with Cerebus But you know that, don't you?

The first Cerebus I ever read was #6? I was plunged from my earlier Marvel days of make-everything-the-same-at-the-end-of-each-issue-while-telling-everyone-incredibly-intense-changes-are-taking-place, into the midst of an incredibly complex and continuous storyline. I instantly knew I had to get every issue and read them all Now I have all the Swords of Cerebuses, the High Society graphic novel, and almost all the issues of Church and State

But why am I telling you all this? You don't care, do you?

What you really want is to be heaped with praise. Okay, that's easy. I think the current issues of Cerebus are among the most spine-tingling and bone-chilling you have ever done! Issues 85 and 86 are probably two of my favorite single comics ever. The art is superb! The dialogue is stupendous, not to mention hilarious,

especially the Rolling Stones accents. You are quite the master of dialect. "Secre' sacre' woes? Wot's at?"-I love the way the "Prince" elides didainfully over his consonants.

But I don't have to tell you that, do I?

The confrontation with Necross was spine-tingling and bone-chilling indeed. And I love the dream issues (Talk about bizarro metaphorical, etc. stuff!) I can't wait to see what happens when he picks up the half-formed globe. Half-formed globe? Half-formed tower! "The tower is rising?" Tower of power. BLACK tower.

THE BLACK TOWER EMPIRE!!!!

AAAARRRRGGGGHHHH... . .

Excuse me. This reminds me of a theory I have about "Cerebus." "Cerebus," is, it seems to me, best read as an intricate examination of the complex personality of the title character. Hence the other main characters in the book should be taken as exteriorized representations of aspects of Cerebus' personality. Take the roach, for instance. Elrod in 86 evokes Tarim to appear in an ultimate manifestation. What do we get? We get the "Tha-pok" of the bug climbing up the side of the tower. "Tha-pok" is the dominant symbol of Cerebus' life at this time. The Secret Sacred Wars Roach epitomized all of Cerebus' negative qualities - and, tha-pok, he is climbing higher and higher up the tower. If the bug reaches the top and becomes Tarim, this will be the triumph, in Cerebus, of those aspects of Cerebus represented by the bug. This is why Cerebus knows he must, at all costs, be stopped (hence his cry, "Not the roaches!"). The defeat of the roach and the reinstatement of Cerebus as pope represents Cerebus' victory over these forces in himself.

Each of the manifestations of the bug, over the years, seems to represent the direction of Cerebus' life taken to its extreme. Thus the appearances of the different roaches are index-points by which we may gague how Cerebus is doing at any given time. Elrod, Sophia, Jaka, and all that lot represent different aspects of Cerebus' personality, or different goals he is trying to attain. The entire book, therefore, may on this level be read as taking place within Cerebus' head, the interactions of the characters representing the conflicting forces within him, and the activities of the actual character Cerebus represents the focal point of these interactions.

This is only a theory, mind you. I haven't tried to apply it rigorously to all the different phases of the story. In any case, all this would be but one level of the marvelously complex and interwoven plot you have been producing, also incorporating political satire, adventure, intrigue, and good ol' down-home chortles. It could also all be a crock of (something nasty).

Thanks for your time, Dave.

yer pal,

Ed Masters
Reed College, Box 822,
Portland, OR., 97202

Sounds a lot like solipsism to me.

****

Dear Dave,

It's happened again, Dave! While you had your back turned, someone snuck into the printers, tore out the letters' page, and substituted a maniacal diatribe about "High Society" and dealers and distributors and the like! Probably the same fellow who did it a few issues ago, I'll wager. This must be stopped, Dave, and we're counting on **you** to do it. Canada must be made safe for letter columns once again!!!

LORD JULIUS IS BACK!!! Goody! But good Lord, who the hell picked him to succeed Weishaupt? Never mind, I know - Lord Julius chose himself. ("After all, if I left it up to the people, they'd just choose a really **popular** leader, and then where would you be, my dear, if I offered to give you a personal tour of the Regency?")

And Duke Leonardi is here, too. OH JOY!!! Nothing can spice up one's Presidency like having a like-a-look following you around, finding all sorts of keypunch snags! Now all we need is some guy to show up and try to sell us "Sewage, sewage, sewage!" and we'll have a lovely little gang together, won't we? (snicker)

While I admit I'm disappointed that Cerebus has let the Papacy go to his head (I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry - punning is a disease that just won't go away!), it's nice to know that if he's ever thrown out of the job again (which should be in a few issues, probably) he'll be able to find gainful employment as a streetlamp, or a lighthouse. Or a float in the Rose Bowl Parade.

It's also nice to see that Most Holy and Most Holy's wife are having a serious tete-a-tete about their marital difficulties. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than seeing two mature, sensible, responsible people have a frank and thorough discussion of serious subjects and reaching a satisfying and mutually agreeable solution. Especially when one of the participants has a wicked backhand like that.

One aside here: I have read in **Amazing Heroes Preview** that you consider Cerebus and Astoria to be the U.S. and the USSR; Who's who? Also, who does that leave as Canada - Elrod? Jaka? Lord Julius? Personally, I can't see Lord Julius as anyone but Freedonia.

The churches reunited? Impossible! And yet - I can definitely see how this development will affect everything that happens to Cerebus' world over the course of his Papacy. With no competition from the Lion of Serrea, anything said by whoever is accepted as Tarim on Earth (and for what it's worth, which ain't much, I'm sure that Lord Julius will find some way to horn in on that) will be held as absolute law.

In the meantime - (1) **Where did Astoria go?** (2) How is Cerebus going to get that incandescent basketball off his skull? (3) DC offered **six** figures? (4) Were you on tour last issue?

I haven't mentioned Gerhard yet, so - Gerhard!

Well, since I don't have anything else of import to impart, Dave, that's it for right now. Keep churnin' out the material, and please try to keep more or less on schedule. I know all looks bleak now (at least it does per that **Amazing Heroes** preview), but just because not everyone reads "Cerebus", that's no reason to get in a snit and not deliver on a regular schedule. Don't forget, 33,000 people are counting on you, Dave! So - TO THE FORE!!! (Or at least the three!)

Oh, and one more thing, Dave: concerning the editorial letters page - you really must break out of your shell and shed this inferiority complex you've developed!

Imperially yours,

Bill Livingston
813 Briwood Dr., SW
Decatur, Alabama 35601

I wish someone would send me that Amazing Heroes Preview. I took the call from Heidi at my last girl-friends (four months this time) place the night I broke up with her. Must be a cheery little piece.

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T'anks

Dave

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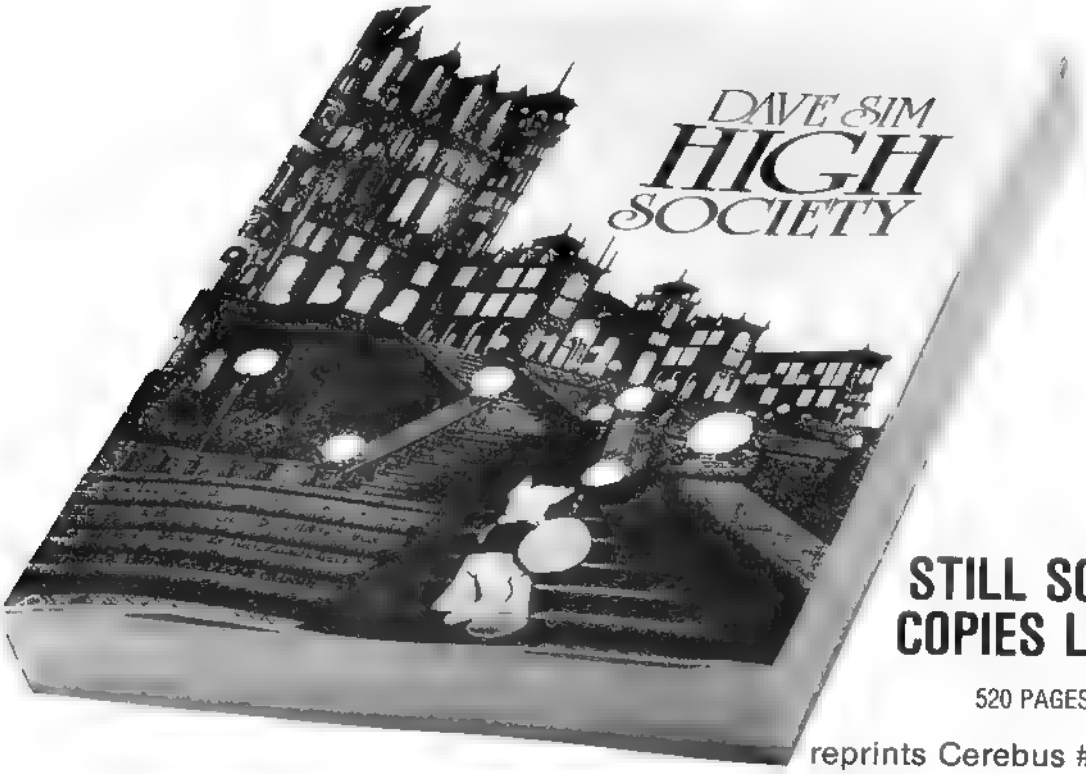

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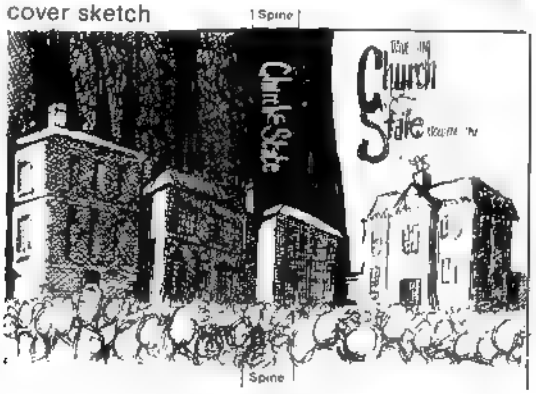

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DAVE SIM HONOLULU, MARCH, 1987

PHOTO BY GERHARD

OF A BITCH SLAVES ALWAYS TRYING TO CAUSE TROUBLE. CEREBUS TOLD THEM TO FINISH THE STATUE FIRST. AND HERE'S THE CITY NEARLY COMPLETED AND ALL THERE IS OF THE STATUE IS TWO LEGS. HALF LEGS. HOLLOW, NOT SOLID LIKE IN THE PLANS, STUPID DAMN SLAVES

...

CRAP.

ALL CEREBUS EVER GOT FROM ANYONE WAS CRAP. NO ONE EVER DID ANYTHING RIGHT AND THEY ALL INTEND TO CAUSE CEREBUS GRIEF.

MIGHT AS WELL GO HOME FOR DINNER...

THE SCAFFOLDING DOESN'T EVEN REACH THE TOP OF THE LEGS. HALF LEGS.

NOW WHAT?

STUPID SLAVES THEY SHOULD ALL...

TREES! CEREBUS TELLS HER TO DECORATE THE SUITE AND SHE GROWS TREES!

TREES AND A COOKING FIRE! SHE'LL HAVE EVERYONE UP HERE LAUGHING AT CEREBUS

WHERE IS SHE? BY TARIM, CEREBUS IS GOING TO GIVE HER A...

AND THERE SHE SITS LIKE A STUPID PEASANT GIRL-- WRAPPING POTATOES IN LEAVES AND SLIDING THEM INTO THE HOT COALS ...

HAVE TO SAY IT AGAIN. SHE CAN'T HEAR.

GET UP.

CEREBUS IS TIRED OF YOU EMBARRASSING HIM IN FRONT OF EVERYONE...

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO IT AGAIN...

SHUT UP! CEREBUS HAS HEARD IT ALL BEFORE!

NO ONE'S GOING TO SAVE YOU THIS TIME...

GOT YOU!!

ONE LESS MOUTH TO FEED IS ONE LESS MOUTH TO FEED.

SOMETHING WRONG.

SHE'S HARDLY FALLING AT ALL-- THE WIND OR SOMETHING HOLDING HER UP...

SHE'S SAYING SOMETHING. SPEAK UP. CEREBUS CAN'T...

THREE? THREE WHAT? YOU HAVE TO SAY IT SLOWER...

MM. THERE SHE GOES NOW

FASTER AND FASTER

AND FASTER AND...